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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

FORMERLY "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT"  
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

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MAY, 1954

## THE A.A.L. AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

By J. S. PARSONAGE, F.L.A.,

Based on the Presidential Address, delivered at Liverpool on 18th March.

THE IMPROVEMENTS in the status and working conditions of the staffs of public libraries since this Association was founded in 1895 are attributable to a number of factors—general, social and economic trends and improvements in working conditions in other spheres; the standards set by the more progressive library authorities and the work of NALGO and the Library Association. But they are due also and to no inconsiderable extent to the work of our own Association, although its founders declared they would not interfere with such matters as salaries and hours, most of them anticipating that improvement would follow automatically from improved status. That these conditions were deplorable even by contemporary standards is evident from the professional literature of the period—the *Transactions* of the 2nd International Conference of 1897, Peter Cowell's *Library Staffs*, Greenwood's *Public Libraries* and the *Library Year Books* which he edited in 1897 and 1900/1. In the last-named of these, W. G. Chambers, for many years the Honorary Treasurer of The Library Assistants' Association (as it then was), wrote thus of the first years of the Association, and the reaction of a number of chief librarians to it:—

"No sooner had the news of the foundation of the L.A.A. become known that it was subjected to criticism from many quarters. Librarians saw in the new movement an attempt, on the part of assistants, at emancipation, which would, and must, inevitably tend to improve their at present precarious status. Looking at it now, after the lapse of five years, one can only imagine that it was the knowledge which librarians possessed of the meagre wages which were doled out to their assistants as well as the long hours of weary drudgery to which they were subjected, that frightened them into imagining that the L.A.A. once firmly established would resolve itself into a trade union. . . . When it was found that the L.A.A. instead of calling its members out on strike was doing its utmost to improve the status of assistants by legitimate means, the objections which had been made at its inauguration gradually diminished. That it now receives the support of librarians of all views is at once apparent from the lecturers who have addressed its meetings."

In the early years of the new century however, the Association became more vigorous in its protests against unsatisfactory conditions, particularly against grossly inadequate salaries and the appointments of totally unqualified librarians, and it voiced its criticisms not only in its official journal, but by direct approach to the offending authorities—

action which in many cases met with a considerable degree of success.

This period—the second decade of the Association's history—was also one of increasing expansion, and from 1906 to 1909 its first five branches were formed—enterprise due largely to the energy and initiative of the newly-elected Honorary Secretary, Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers, who in the process of stumping the country on the Association's behalf, had confirmed the suspicion that conditions in the provinces were, if anything, even worse than those prevailing in London. In an endeavour to obtain a more complete picture, the committee drew up a questionnaire which was sent to all municipal library authorities, and the replies received (and the great majority did reply) formed the basis of the momentous *Report on the Hours, Salaries, Training and Conditions of Service of Assistants in British Municipal Libraries* which was published by the Council (as the Committee had by now become), and after adoption by the Annual General Meeting of 1911, circulated throughout the country, leading in many cases to improved conditions. The greatest single obstacle in the way of authorities fully implementing its recommendations was the general limitation of the library rate to 1d. in the £, the repeal of which (so far as England and Wales was concerned) by the Public Libraries Act, 1919, was due, by universal consent, very largely to the agitation led by George Roebuck, Librarian of Walthamstow and a former Honorary Secretary of the L.A.A. At that time it seemed that this Act would herald the dawn of a new age of public librarianship, and whilst this hope was eventually largely realised, the fact that many authorities were apparently very reluctant to take advantage of their new financial freedom is clear from the figures quoted in Lt.-Col. J. M. Mitchell's *Report on the Public Library System in Great Britain and Ireland* published by the C.U.K.T. in 1924. These showed that, apart from the new county systems (most of which were financed by library rates of a fraction of a penny), out of a total of 340 library authorities in England and Wales there were still 60 whose library rate did not exceed 1d., and only 81 exceeding 2d.—and of course it must be remembered that even prior to 1919 the library rate of 50 authorities was already in excess of 1d. by virtue of local acts. Commenting on the fact that many of these figures were for the financial year 1921/22, Lt.-Col. Mitchell added, "One is tempted to hope that the figures for 1922/23 were better." That there was no immediate improvement, however, is evident from the figures for 1924, which are given in one of the most important documents in the history of librarianship—the Kenyon Report of 1927 or, to give it its full title, *The Report of the Departmental Committee of the Board of Education on Public Libraries in England and Wales*. In passing, it is of interest to note that this Committee called no less than six witnesses on behalf of our Association—more than were called to represent any other single body.

The year 1919 saw not only the passing of the Public Libraries Act, but also the return from the Forces to civilian life of hundreds of librarians who lost no time in making known, through the L.A.A., their demands for improvements in salaries and working conditions, and for the exploration of every method of achieving this end. There was a suggestion that the Association should attempt to secure recognition as a trade union, but the prevailing opinion was that an Association is not a trade union, but that it should encourage its members to join their appropriate existing union, and, so far as matters affecting public library assistants were concerned, should work in the closest co-operation with NALGO.

During the next few years the Association of Assistant Librarians

(as it had become in 1922) in addition to campaigning for better conditions, was actively engaged in matters affecting its own domestic policy and status. In 1929 after a long period of negotiation followed by a plebiscite of all its members, it decided to accept an invitation to affiliate with the Library Association and to become one of its sections.

Referring to this union, the Honorary Secretary of the Library Association, Mr. (now Dr.) E. A. Savage, used these now familiar words of the A.A.L.:

"The future is theirs. To them we look for a revival of spirit and strength. If they come to us as a docile and uncritical body, they will burden rather than reinforce us. If they hope to achieve anything, let them draw up a forward programme and press for its performance."

The A.A.L. accepted this challenge, its renunciation of complete independence resulting in no loss of customary vigour, and within two years it had issued a sequel to the 1911 Report. This new document, the *Report on the Hours, Salaries, Training and Conditions of Service in British Municipal Libraries*, 1931, showed that, although great progress had been made since 1911, conditions in many places were still very far from satisfactory, and the discrepancy between the best and the worst still too great; averages were indeed better, but as the editor, Mr. F. Seymour Smith, pointed out: "Averages may conceal a multitude of evils. No consolation to a man dying of a fever to know that his average temperature during the whole of the year had been but a fraction over normal; . . . so, junior assistants . . . who must wait five years before they are allowed a summer holiday of more than six days will find no joy in contemplating the satisfactory average."

The Report was well received and sympathetically reviewed and, like its predecessor, was instrumental in securing improved conditions in many libraries. Shortly after its publication, the A.A.L. Council set up a Forward Policy Committee "to formulate a general forward policy on behalf of the profession at large, particularly in relation to the Report . . . such committee to report to the A.A.L. Council with a view to its findings being discussed, approved, and sent forward to the Council of the Library Association"; its success in this direction is clear from the Report's acknowledged influence on the *Recommendations on Salaries and Conditions of Service* issued by the L.A. Council in 1934. This latter document was influenced also very largely by similar recommendations issued by NALGO—indeed the inter-war years were characterised not only by the ever-increasing number of local authorities who endeavoured to equate the salaries, and as far as possible the working conditions, of their library staffs with those operating in other departments, but also by the attempts of NALGO to secure greater uniformity in the matter of salary scales for all local government officers throughout the country. It aimed to achieve this by collective bargaining, or Whitleyism as it is usually known from the name of the chairman (Rt. Hon. J. H. Whitley) of the Committee on Relations between Employers and Employed, whose Report, published in 1917, recommended that standing joint councils consisting of representatives of both employers and employed be established for the purpose of negotiation. The first N.J.C. for local government was short-lived, but some of the provincial Whitley Councils were more successful, particularly that for Lancashire and Cheshire, which "showed not only that Whitleyism was inherently suitable to the Local Government field . . . but evolved an invaluable pattern for later extensions of Whitleyism throughout the provincial level, and for the eventual re-establishment of a National Joint Council" (J. H. Warren). It was this latter body, revived shortly before the war, and reconstituted in 1944,

which was responsible for the publication of the document which, more than any other, governs the working conditions of public library assistants; I refer, of course, to the *Scheme of Conditions of Service* which became operative as from 1st April, 1946. The recommendations of the "Charter"—to use its popular name—were influenced to a great extent by those of the Hadow Report of 1934, and represented for most officers a distinct improvement in salaries and conditions, and also, particularly for junior officers, a greater measure of uniformity. In addition, certain important principles were laid down regarding the grading of posts, right of appeal under certain conditions, and other matters.

The fact that library staffs were to share in these, and any subsequent benefits recommended by the N.J.C., did not mean that there was no further need for our Association to take action on these matters. The Charter is not a static document, and there have been many improvements to it since 1946, some applicable to all officers, others only to a particular class and especially with regard to the latter, NALGO in making its representations at N.J.C. level may be guided by the advice of its Joint Consultative Committee. As the Library Association is represented on this Committee, it is possible, provided agreement is reached at all stages, for an A.A.L. resolution forwarded to the Library Association to become embodied in a N.J.C. recommendation. We trust that this procedure will apply in the case of the *Recommendations on Welfare and Working Conditions of Public Library Staffs*, which were based on a national survey undertaken by Mr. F. C. Tighe, a former President of the Association, and now City Librarian of Nottingham. These recommendations were approved by the A.A.L. Council in 1952 and forwarded to the L.A. Council, which not only published them as a guide to library authorities, but also sent copies to NALGO requesting their support, through the N.E.C. and the staff side of the N.J.C. for those susceptible of national application to be included in the Charter; this matter is at present under review.

#### SALARIES.

Of all conditions of service the most important is salaries—Mr. McColvin's statement in 1939 that "salaries are the key to good staffing" has now even greater force since there are more occupations offering better working conditions and comparable security of tenure.

Although the rate limit was the chief obstacle in the way of improved salaries, it was not always the only reason. It did not excuse a number of medium sized authorities from paying the deputy less than the caretaker, nor explain why the salary of the chief assistant in one metropolitan borough library should be £120 plus residential quarters, whilst in the neighbouring borough—an authority with a population of similar size and a higher rateable value, it should only be £55, and Mr. Munford has quoted the case of Halifax, which although paying its librarian only £80 per annum, yet was able to show a substantial balance in its library account at the end of the financial year.

However, it was generally felt that most library authorities would take advantage of their emancipation from the rate limit by paying their staffs more reasonable salaries. The new Act received the Royal Assent on December 23rd, 1919; and on 8th January, 1920, almost immediately after the Christmas and New Year holidays, a letter from the President and Honorary Secretary of the L.A.A. was sent to all library authorities asking that, in view of the new legislation, "library assistants should receive at least equal financial consideration as given to other municipal officers."



No doubt there was some improvement in places; that it was not nearly so marked or widespread as had been hoped may be inferred from the following paragraph in the Association's next Annual Report:—

"It is with extreme regret that the Council perceives very little tendency to improve the status and circumstances of the Profession now that library incomes are no longer limited, and again and again it has felt compelled to protest to Corporations advertising for officers at salaries which were contemptible in their meagreness."

In fact, it was becoming increasingly obvious to the Association and to the profession as a whole that the continued existence of the rate limit had done immeasurable harm in creating an attitude of mind which no mere act of legislation could immediately entirely dispel; indeed in places its long term effects in financial and other matters still linger on, although probably not recognised as such.

During the next few years the Association co-operated with the L.A. and NALGO in drawing up recommended scales of salaries, but the effectiveness of these was hampered by the absence of a National Whitley Council, and in 1927 the Kenyon Committee (consisting chiefly of laymen) stated that "the trained librarian should be paid no less than the trained teacher" (a recommendation still very far from complete implementation); but even as late as 1939 it was not unusual for posts requiring the services of a F.L.A. to be advertised at £150, and later still the McColvin Report contained several instances of atrocious salaries—as for example £200 for the deputy of a library system serving a population of 100,000. At the junior end of the scale, the salaries of male assistants usually ranged from about £50 at 16 to £200 at 26, although even here we find considerable variation, not excluding to some extent those areas where salaries were determined by Provincial Whitley Councils; for example, the scale applied by the London District Council in 1944 was considerably better than that operated by the South Metropolitan Council, and that of the Midland Council compared favourably with that of Yorkshire. It is true that in many libraries special payments were made to assistants obtaining professional certificates, but in many others normal increments were withheld from those failing to obtain their first certificate within a stipulated period of time. With few exceptions salaries between the wars were still far from satisfactory, and it is not surprising that the "Careers" books of the period were almost unanimous in describing librarianship as a "poorly paid profession."

The Charter, of course, gave us a national scale of salaries, but as the application of that scale in the grading of posts above General Division level was left to the discretion of library authorities, the L.A. issued a series of recommendations for their guidance, but not until 1951 was a N.J.C. award made in respect of library staffs. The basis of this award, I need hardly remind you, is that a chartered librarian in charge of a branch or department and supervising a staff of three whole-time assistants should receive A.P.T. III, but despite the efforts of the L.A. to secure a more definite ruling, the grading of posts above this level was left to authorities, "due regard to be paid to the duties and responsibilities of each post and to the standard recommended." Unfortunately some authorities effectively demonstrated the weakness of this clause by virtually ignoring it, but there were other, more far-sighted authorities who, to their great credit, and eventually to their benefit, interpreted the clause in the spirit intended by the negotiating bodies and reviewed the grading of their staffs in the light of the standard provided. As a result, 762 posts, including 291 beyond the level of A.P.T. III, were upgraded within eight months, and there have been many others since. Conse-

quently, the library profession is better graded now than at any time since the introduction of the Charter; and, in addition, a number of authorities have made use of the powers granted under paragraph 23 in respect of staff in the General Division. Whilst these improvements are to be welcomed, they do not justify any attitude of complacency—not only because the general standard of salaries does not compare favourably with those of many similar occupations, but also because all too frequently posts are advertised—and accepted—at salaries which fall very far below the average. The problems arising from this situation have been the subject of comment in our Council and in the columns of our journal, and are indeed, causing grave disquiet in all ranks of the profession.

#### QUALIFICATIONS.

In its efforts to secure adequate salaries, the Association has never lost sight of the fact that one of its most forceful arguments lay in the high standard of professional training necessary for the staffing of an efficient library service. "Our first care must be for certificated qualification," said Roebuck in 1906, and the Association has always striven to encourage and help assistants to qualify professionally and fit themselves for promotion. Consequently, it viewed with considerable alarm the practice, at one time by no means uncommon, of appointing as chief librarians, men without any previous training or experience, and felt justified in protesting vigorously (the word "indignantly" was used on one such occasion) against such appointments. Although it is possible to quote examples of men who, without any previous experience, have succeeded as librarians, they are very few indeed, particularly in the field of public librarianship.

The introduction of the L.A. examination syllabus in 1885 coinciding with the start of a period of rapid expansion of the public library movement should have led to some improvement, but the meagre salaries often failed to attract suitably qualified candidates, although Greenwood felt that "many of the applicants . . . would be dear at half the salary offered," and went on, "the best librarians are the men who have been trained in public libraries and have grown up in the work." Poor salaries were not the only reason for such appointments, and J. D. Brown wrote of trained librarians being passed over "for sentimental or local reasons" in favour of stickit ministers, unlucky schoolmasters, retired soldiers, minor journalists, unsuccessful booksellers and dilettante town councillors," and the results, he said, "had in every case been unfortunate."

The folly of such appointments was obvious even to people outside the profession. Addressing the Inaugural Meeting of the L.A.A. in 1904, Mr. Sidney Webb, commenting on the poor salaries paid to public librarians, said he thought that "the prizes of the profession should not go to persons, however eminent and distinguished, who were outside the profession. The means to remedy this unsatisfactory position lay largely with the library assistants of to-day."

#### REGISTRATION.

This Association felt that one way of helping "to remedy this unsatisfactory position" lay in the compilation and maintenance of a register of professional librarians, and it strongly urged the Library Association to take action along these lines. The eventual formation of such a register was probably inevitable; that it was established as early as 1910 was almost unquestionably due to the influence of the L.A.A. "Let me remind you," L. S. Jast, then Honorary Secretary of the L.A., told the Association in 1912, "that the demand for registration came

almost entirely from you yourselves, and . . . it was only by persistent effort that such action was taken."

Although the formation of the Register did not entirely prevent the recurrence of these unsatisfactory appointments, it was anticipated by many librarians that the provisions of the 1919 Act would be more effective, not only because better salaries could now be offered to attract qualified applicants, but also because the smaller authorities (which had not unnaturally been the chief offenders in this respect) now had the opportunity of relinquishing their library powers to the county councils. What was not generally foreseen, however, was the failure of many of these counties to learn from the mistakes of others in appointing their first librarians. In the *Library Assistant* for April, 1925, we read that "rural library appointments again accounted for a large proportion of the Honorary Secretary's correspondence, and the letters he had sent concerning them had not been without effect in several cases," and later in the same issue we learn of one county which advertised for a chauffeur as county librarian!

That many municipal authorities still continued to overlook the claims of professional qualifications and experience in making senior appointments can be deduced from the Kenyon Report, which, in the section on urban libraries, said (para. 250) "Cases have frequently occurred, and continue to occur, when candidates possessing the training of the Library Association or the School of Librarianship have been passed over in favour of candidates with no technical qualifications," and (para. 251) "The public must learn to demand trained librarians, and councils and corporations must realise that it is their duty to require an adequate standard . . . in those whom they appoint." We can safely assume, I hope, that all authorities do now realise their very obvious obligations in this respect.

#### FACILITIES FOR STUDYING.

The Kenyon Report then went on to stress the need for professional study, pointing out (para. 254) "that it is the duty of library authorities to see that members of their staff . . . are encouraged to take advantage of the means of training which now exist." A similar viewpoint was also expressed in the 1911 and the 1931 Reports, as indeed it is in paragraph 8 of the Charter in regard to the local government service as a whole. The main provisions of this paragraph, together with other appropriate facilities, were recently published in the *L.A. Record* at the request of the A.A.L. Council, which was perturbed by the fact that these recommendations, although interpreted liberally by some authorities, were being virtually ignored by others. As the Tighe Report points out, library staffs are in special need of such assistance because their awkward hours of duty make study more difficult. These inconvenient (and formerly, long) hours have always been a handicap, particularly in the days before the first War. Indeed J. J. Ogle regarded "insufficient leisure for needed study" as one of the chief "Hindrances to the training of efficient librarians," to quote the title of a paper he delivered in 1897. It is true that, according to the 1911 Report, and the *Report on Hours of Library Assistants in Lancashire* which had been issued by the Manchester and District Library Assistants' Fellowship in the previous year, there were many libraries whose staff were allowed to study during "slack times" (indeed in a few, definite periods were allocated for private study or lectures by senior staff) but there were many others in which serious understaffing prevented any such facilities from being granted.

## HOURS.

Quite apart from the question of time for study, the hours worked by many librarians and assistants at this time were not only inimical to their welfare, but must in many cases have been injurious to their health, and as far back as 1877, J. Winter Jones, the first President of the L.A., had warned against "hours of duty so long as to produce exhaustion of body and mind." In the extract (quoted earlier) from the article dealing with the formation of the L.A.A., which appeared in the Library Year Book for 1900/1, W. G. Chambers used the phrase "long hours of weary drudgery"; referring to this, the editor remarked, "conditions must have changed since then as may be seen in the abstract of hours of duty in this Year Book." Yet on turning to this abstract we find that in over half the libraries mentioned, the staff worked at least 48 hours per week, and in six of these, over 60 hours.

Both the 1931 Report and L.A.'s Recommendations of 1934 suggested a working week of 38 hours, but this did not become general until introduced by the Charter in 1946. Even now, in spite of this, and the fact that many libraries close rather earlier than before the war, the problem of the distribution of hours still remains. Of course it probably always will, because our public departments must of necessity remain open at times which enable them to be visited by those wishing to make personal use of the facilities offered. Nevertheless, in each library there should be an attempt to strike a reasonable balance between the needs of the public and the welfare of the staff, and the disadvantages arising from irregular hours have a serious effect on the recruitment and retention of young people, most of whom naturally prefer to be off duty in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons. The Tighe Report stresses the desirability of keeping these inconveniences to a minimum, and the statistical evidence on which it is based showed all too clearly that, in the words of my friend the Honorary Secretary at the Bournemouth Conference "it is amazing the variety of inconveniences which some authorities manage to cram into 38 hours." More than that, the Report suggests financial compensation for inconvenient hours of duty.

## OTHER CONDITIONS OF SERVICE.

The Tighe Report, in addition to these recommendations, and those to which reference has already been made, also deals with general welfare provisions regarding staff rest rooms, hygiene, first aid, etc. The progressively greater emphasis placed on this aspect of working conditions by the successive reports appears to indicate a comparatively recent growth of interest, and as late as 1929 it was pointed out that whilst there were five American references to staff welfare in Cannon's Bibliography, there were none to British periodicals. This growth of interest is not, of course, confined to librarianship and NALGO has recently been pressing for legislation based on the recommendations of the Gowers Report of 1949 on *Health, Welfare and Safety in Non-Industrial Employment*.

Such legislation would no doubt implement most of the recommendations contained in this section of the Tighe Report, and it is no criticism of this and the previous Reports, or of the great influence they have wielded, to suggest that the most likely and in some cases the only way of achieving complete national implementation is either by means of legislation (as for example, in the case of superannuation, which was discussed at length in the two earlier Reports) or by pressure exerted at the highest level (as in the case of those matters now covered by N.J.C. recommendations).

There are, however, many important aspects of working conditions

which are beyond the scope of any legislation or centralised jurisdiction. I refer to those psychological factors which can contribute so effectively to the morale and efficiency of the staff; and the character of which reflect, to a large degree, the quality of the staff management of the Librarian and those of his subordinates who are in charge of staff. Many junior assistants experience a sense of boredom or frustration at a monotonous round of purely routine duties; but this can be offset, or at any rate minimised, by increasing the variety of such work and emphasising its value and importance. The Librarian's success in this respect is likely to be limited, however, if the administration of the service is not sufficiently streamlined to eliminate those wasteful or unnecessary processes which form part of the administrative machinery in far too many libraries. Indeed, the assistant's sense of purpose will be determined to a great extent by the efficiency of the library, and the quality of the service it gives its public, and it is significant that the local prestige of the public library can influence to a marked degree its ability to recruit staff of the best type who will be proud to be associated with it. It is important, too, that the assistant should be given a broad view of his work and allowed to benefit from a well-organised scheme of in-service training designed to give him an insight into the work of all departments of the library system, and supplemented by a wide variety of practical experience. In this way not only will the staff be helped professionally, but the efficiency of the library will be enhanced as more assistants acquire a better knowledge of the administration and resources of the service as a whole.

Next year the A.A.L. will celebrate its Diamond Jubilee. The celebration of its Silver Jubilee in 1920 coincided with the end of a period of almost universally poor salaries, long hours and deplorable conditions—all attributable mainly to the crippling effect of the rate limit. The next 25 years saw great improvements due largely to the repeal of the rate limit, the influence of NALGO and the Provincial Whitley Councils as well as that of the L.A. and the A.A.L. The poor conditions still obtaining in many places, however, made clear the necessity for a national body, speaking with authority similar to that exercised by the Burnham Committee in respect of the teaching profession. At the time of our Golden Jubilee in 1945, such a body had not only come into being, but was actively engaged in the compilation of the Charter which was published a few months later; and the Association's work in this field since then has largely been directed towards the securing of any possible improvements within the framework of the Charter. The Association has every right to be proud of its achievements, but has no cause for complacency, for there is still much to be done towards improving conditions of service.

## THOSE CONFERENCE BLUES

BY STANLEY SNAITH.

### I.

MANY WORDS—including some luminous ones of my own—have been devoted to library conferences. Yet singularly little has been written about the social side of these gatherings—the periods when we are, so to speak, temporarily back in civvies. One wonders why. After all, a not inconsiderable part of our time is spent away from Base. From various quarters we converge upon the chosen resort, and thereafter, except when

lending our ears and taking our gruel like men, we are scattered about the town like chaff. We book at a hotel (private) or a hotel (unqualified) or even, as happened to me once, at one of those boarding houses whose porticoes should bear the Dantesque warning: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," and thenceforth are completely lost to each other. What goes on behind those uniform and unvouchsafing facades? I wish some librarian of standing would enlighten us. My own experience of these mysteries is brief and partial. I should not attempt to draw the veil. Nevertheless—

## II.

First, that boarding house I put up at, or with.\* I reserved a room there because the town seemed to be exhaustively deficient in accommodation, and this house sent out a brochure, and every traveller knows that a brochure is a mark of respectability.

In spite of the brochure, the first sight of the board residence plunged my simple faith down among the wines and spirits. It was situate, as the property agents say, in the hinterland of the community: an indistinguishable unit in a Terrace. It commanded no sea view, but as a surrogate there was a frank and uninhibited display of the hind-quarters of a steam laundry. It boasted, so far as I could gather, two rooms: the parlour, where we lounged, gamed, conversed and ate, and the room in which I slept. I suppose there were other apartments (on the second night we took aboard eight actresses from the local ice-show) but these—the rooms, not the actresses—I had to take on trust.

The landlady was what Arnold Bennett would call "a body." She was recklessly chinned and bosomed, comfortable and gregarious. But her régime was strict. Mid-day and evening meals were served fifteen minutes after Closing Time. (Her clock and that of the nearby tabernacle were synchronised to a nicety). The repast had at least the merit of being foreseeable: it would be, and was, a secretive and redoubtable Stew. If you were inconveniently sober enough to want food, and Madam was sober enough to prepare it, and the Help was sober enough to serve it, you got it. Otherwise one beguiled oneself on the piano and awaited events. The piano was a vintage upright—born 1860 and still going frail—an heirloom, Milady told us—and it sighed nostalgically at my account of Mendelssohn's *Song Without Words* . . .

## III.

How different the Royal. The Royal had no false modesty about its claim to the purple. The Royal had plainly never heard of terraces. The Royal had no Uprights. But it had a commissionaire, pile carpets, lifts, staircases that were unambiguously staircases, cocktail bars on every floor. And it had chicken for dinner.

Chicken! You can't, I said to myself, go wrong with chicken. There, I was too sanguine. You can. I did. By some cuisinal inadvertence, I was given a plenteous portion of pterodactyl, presumably distinterred in

\*Lector: On a point of grammar—

Auctor: Well?

Lector: I mean to say—Prepositions—

Auctor: Have done, sir!

Lector: All the same—

Auctor: Anyway, what's the harm?—

Lector: But—you, of all people!

Auctor: Oh, all right! But keep it to yourself.

the crustaceous deposits abounding thereabouts. "This creature's wings," my encyclopaedia tells me, "consisted of a membraneous expansion between the outer digit of the forelimb and the sides of the body." I champed a few sombre forkfuls of the membraneous expansion: only a few forkfuls, but, like Mercutio's wound, it was enough: it served. I laid down my irons. What to do? Suggest an autopsy? Sarcastically propose that these vestigial relics be forwarded to the Science Museum? Put in an indent for a cutlet of stegosaurus by way of compensation? Some can make these imperial gestures. Others cannot. I cannot. A violet by a mossy stone half hidden from the eye, that is S.S. So I sat hungry. I was in no way comforted to regard the three librarians whom chance had cast up at my table: heads down, silent, intent, they ingurgitated with an assiduity more appropriate to a hind or serf in the harvest fields, than to the austere and cloistered courts of librarianship. Are we a learned profession? The conundrum has often been posed. I was quite sure of the answer. No savants these, I reflected—just stomachs. By the time this gruesome *Walpurgis* concluded—my paleozoic fossil was removed with injured hauteur by the head waiter—I was, if not inert, at least something less than *ert*. We needs must love the lowest when we see it, and my thoughts played lasciviously upon oyster bars, mussels, porterhouse steaks, bowls of punch—that sort of thing.

And, smack in the middle of this lucullan reverie, up must pop my Chairman. He would. They always do.

He had dined well. And his fare, unlike mine, was strictly of the historical period.

"What time is the Reception?" asked the Chairman.

"I don't know," I said.

The Chairman communed with his breviary. "Seven-thirty for eight," he said.

I replied: "I am not going."

"Not going!"

"No."

"But why?"

"I am constitutionally antipathetic to ceremonial occasions."

"You're—What?"

"I don't like them."

"Oh, but we *must*!"

I had to be a bit stiffish with him. You know what Chairmen are. If I had worn cuffs I should have shot them in the manner of a stage aristocrat rebuking an uppish retainer. "I am not going," I repeated, in a manner brooking no contradiction. That showed him!

#### IV.

When the Chairman and I arrived at the Palace Pavilion it was at once apparent that we were in the presence of *noblesse*. The proceedings were not yet in full swing—though showing signs of rotation—but already the foyer was what Keats would have called a blazonry of formal wear. The Earl of Battersea and Viscount Gardner of Luton were strongly in evidence, and even the lesser fry had made some effort to raise themselves above the quotidian conception of clothing as a mere protection against the elements. But outsplendouring all, fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky, was Mr. Taylor of St. Pancras. Mr. Taylor of St. Pancras has looks and presence; and this evening he was, like Cleopatra before him, so overwhelming that the senses swooned. As Whistler would say, he was a symphony in black and white. The difference between Mr. Taylor of St. Pancras and me was that while I could



have passed muster at a Sixpenny Hop, Mr. Taylor of St. Pancras had dighted himself with the stern and rabbinical dedication of those to whom dressing is Dressing.

I was in tweeds.

Harris—for the information of my future biographers—tweeds.

A rather spirited shade of green.

As for the Chairman, he was neat but not gaudy: definitely no *arbitrator elegantiarum*; dressed—verifiably—but only in the most Hegelian sense of the term. The *Tailor and Cutter* would have consigned the two of us to the limbo of scarecrows and ragpickers.

I peered anxiously through the glass partition into the reception room. There, things were going on. Holding court, in a dramatic centrality, were the Mayor (ermined), the Chairman of the Branch (tails), and the wife of the Chairman of the Branch (something straight from Dior). And approaching this consequential trinity was a column of—I can think of no other word, and Lector must lump it—presentees, the while a four-piece band went through a melodious dumb-show.

I glanced at the Chairman. He looked scared. He glanced at me. Doubtless I, too, looked scared. Anyway, I felt scared. Moreover, *Rhamphorhynchus Phyllurus* was gnawing at my vitals.

"Let's get it over," said the Chairman.

A Wayside Pulpit motto from Rev. 3, 11, occurred to me; and murmuring "Behold I come quickly," I opened the door and entered. The Chairman at my heels.

I had timed my entrance infelicitously. I always do. You see, I was gambling. There were others in this Pavilion—I will not name them—whose habiliments—I refrain from describing them—were, like mine, cut on functional lines. Upon these resolute dissidents I reposed my hopes. If only one of these had preceded me, I should have gone forward with *panache*, fortified by the thought that I was at least a degree or two above the submerged tenth.

But immediately in front of me—even his back proclaimed him—was the glass of fashion and mould of form himself: Mr. — have you guessed it?—Taylor of St. Pancras. Mr. Taylor of St. Pancras was manifestly equal to the occasion. He advanced into the great open spaces at a measured tread like the Royal Artillery's Slow March, with the air of one about to receive the Queen's Medal for something or other. I tagged behind. Inwardly, I was feeling like something the Management ought to be complained to about.\* But after all, I reassured myself, I may not be one of the Big Shots of the profession, but I am a chief Librarian. I can, I reassured myself, prove this. I have a distinct recollection of being appointed. Moreover, the circumstance is recorded in the tablets of the law, in other words the minutes of the Borough Council. Besides, I reassured myself, he can't eat me . . .

Mr. Taylor had been majestically received and had gone his way. Now it was my turn. A Lord in Waiting (white gloves, on my honour!) asked my name. "Snaith," I said, "Bethnal Green."

"Mr. Smith?" said the Lord in Waiting.

"Snaith."

"Of — ?"

"Bethnal Green."

The Lord in Waiting drew himself to his full stature, as though this were his long-awaited moment.

"Mr. Smith!" he bugled, and added, as though directing the Mayor's

\*Lector: What, again?

Auctor: Oh, go and boil your head!



attention to some peculiar distinction, "from Bethnal Green."

At close quarters the Mayor, even with the formidable advantage of his toga, was, so to speak, writ small; and probably (I merely speculate) abashed at being dressed in his little brief authority. Clearly he had never heard of me. (For that matter, I had never heard of him).

However, with a to-know-all-is-to-forgive-all side-glance at my tweeds, he accommodated my outstretched hand. He mumbled something, bless him, with the inordinate imprecision so characteristic of mayors. I mumbled something in return. He replied *sotto voce* to my reply, then turned to the next postulant. The worst was over.

I moved rightwards to the Chairman of the Branch. He, poor chap, said his say. I intoned the response. He said, "I beg your pardon?" I repeated my piece. He indulged himself in a pleasantry. I smiled weakly. I was conscious of being at a disadvantage. What is the correct thing to say on these occasions? I know not. Perhaps one just proceeds by the light of nature. That is precisely where I fall short. Give me my deckle-edged and a trusty quill and I can make the mother tongue eat out of my hand. Demand of me improvisation and I am as incoherent as Caliban upon Setebos in that wonderful poem of Browning's.

I touched the limp extremities of Mrs. Chairman and withdrew, carrying it off to the best of my poor ability. But from somewhere within the arcana of my consciousness, a voice was saying, "You sartorial slubberdegullion! You Kipps *redivivus*! Tweeds—here, of all places! Why not have come with tiger skin and assegai and made a proper job of it?" However, I managed to nod insouciantly to several coronets and tiaras and eventually hove to at a corner table, discreetly placed in the shadows. Almost at the same instant my Chairman (in my stress I had forgotten all about my Chairman) arrived, quite unflustered: the obvious master of his fate and captain of his soul.

At my advent a young man put down his physic, scrutinised me, and said: "Surely you are Mr. Snaith?"

I made a clean breast of it: "I am."

"Stanley Snaith?"

"A piece of him," I said, echoing Hamlet.

"The author of—?" and he peeled off the titles of two or three books with which I am credited—if credited is the right word.

I said "Yes."

He rose to his feet. "May I shake your hand, sir?"

This touching *devoir*, unmerited though it was, went far to restore my wilted *amour propre*. Insignificant animalcule as I was, I could still hold up my head.

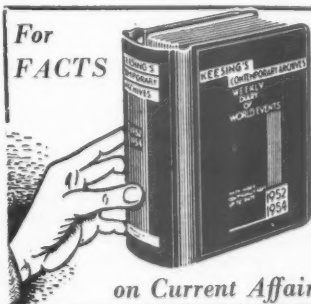
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ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association).  
**59th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**AGENDA.**

1. Minutes of the previous meeting, held at Sheffield in the Library Theatre, on Sunday, 13th September, 1953.
2. To receive the Annual Report of the Council, including the Annual Report of the Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Auditors for the year ended 31st December, 1953.
3. To nominate and elect two Honorary Auditors, who, in accordance with Rule 5(c), may not be members of the Council.
4. Motions received:
  - (a) "Having in mind the impetus it could give to original research by members, and the beneficial effect it must have on the status of the profession, this Annual General Meeting instructs the A.A.L. Council to consider what representations should be made to the Library Association regarding the general reintroduction of the essay or thesis, or the compilation of a bibliography, either as part of the Final Examination or as a voluntary post-Fellowship undertaking." (A. C. Jones and J. W. Carter).
  - (b) "That Rule 6(c) be amended to read:  
DIVISIONAL REPRESENTATIVES. Each Division shall elect annually one representative to serve on the Council where the membership of the Division, on 31st December previously, does not exceed 350, two representatives where the membership exceeds 350, but does not exceed 750, three representatives where the membership exceeds 750, and one additional delegate for every 500 members above the first 750." (W. G. Smith and others).
  - (c) "That this Annual General Meeting instructs the A.A.L. Council to consider making the necessary arrangements so that defaulting members of the A.A.L. should continue to receive copies of the *Assistant Librarian* until the December of the year in which they default, instead of, as at present, June of that year, and to report on this matter to the next Annual General Meeting." (R. G. Surridge and A. H. Bill).
  - (d) "That this meeting considers it wrong to deprive students of any part of a correspondence course for which payment has been made. It, therefore, instructs the A.A.L. Council to consider making arrangements for all correspondence course students to receive a complete set of printed lessons." (W. G. Smith and Miss J. Binder).
5. Any other business.

**PROGRAMME.**

The Annual General Meeting will take place in London on May 20th. Full details of the afternoon and evening programme were published in the March issue of the *Assistant Librarian*. There may yet be a few theatre tickets left, and members who wish to take part in the afternoon visit to the Old Vic,\* should make application immediately to Mr. W. G. Smith, Tooting Branch Library, Mitcham Road, London.

S.W.17. Members who would like to stay overnight with a member of Greater London Division should also write to Mr. Smith if they have not already done so.

The Annual Meeting itself will be held at Chaucer House, and will begin at 6.45 p.m. No prior notification is required from members who wish to attend this meeting without taking part in the afternoon programme. The business meeting will be followed by a talk by Mr. J. G. O'Leary, Borough Librarian of Dagenham.

\*The play will be *The Tempest*, the cast of which includes Fay Compton, Claire Bloom, Richard Burton and Michael Hordern.

## THE 5th ANNUAL WEEKEND CONFERENCE

APRIL 9—11.

I SUPPOSE we must have had adventures at Nottingham very similar to those which Stanley Snaith describes elsewhere in this issue, though to our great loss we probably didn't notice them so much. We shall remember, however, our first visit to the groaning dining tables, the entertainment so successfully provided by our hosts of the East Midland Division, and the late night discussion group conducted by the Chairman and Hon. Secretary of G.L.D. We shall remember a quantity of creature comforts presided over by the genial Miss Green, and some interesting visits made in what we have come to regard as our customary conference sunshine.

Though the conference itself may have lacked the sparkle of some of its predecessors, it succeeded more than ever before in involving in discussion the vast majority of those present, so that the modest back-benchers of Saturday morning took away with them not only the views of others, but also some newly-voiced opinions of their own. It is in fact to the newcomers that this conference will have appealed the most. The stalwarts found themselves treading again over much familiar ground—familiar from its more thorough trampling at Manchester and at Bristol. But staff, readers and their relationships provide perennial problems for discussion, and although we may this year have made no great stride towards their solution, we have at least given them another airing.

Our first sad duty at Nottingham was to mourn the absence of W. Howard Phillips—especially incumbent upon those who found themselves in the running for appointment as last-minute substitute discussion leader. This honour was finally conferred on the Association's Honorary Treasurer, W. S. Hudson, and we proceeded to business.

The reports which follow convey something of the flavour of our discussion, but it must be emphasised that there are no prepared papers at these conferences, and no report, however full, could do more than indicate the general trend of discussion and the more concrete conclusions.

STAFF. (*Leader: D. I. Colley*). Staff was discussed under three headings: Recruitment, Training, and Management. At least one group was in favour of the Clerical—Professional division, with the following characteristics: Clerical staff of a somewhat lower educational standard than at present, alert, neat and manually dexterous, conscientious, but lacking ambition or initiative; Professional staff of a higher educational

standard than at present (no precise standard was agreed upon), having initiative, breadth of vision and sense of vocation. Once minimum educational standards in each group had been satisfied, personality was considered to be of greater importance than academic qualifications. Routine tasks of a clerical nature should be learnt by experience and supervision on the job; professional training, preferably at a full-time school, should be undertaken after an initial period of practical experience. The present high turnover of staff was due to low salaries and poor conditions of service on the one hand, and mismanagement and lack of inspiring leadership on the other. There was no formal training in library management, but professional librarians inevitably evolved into either bookmen or administrators, and these qualities must be taken into consideration in building up a well balanced staff.

**READERS.** (*Leader*: W. S. Hudson). Discussion of the satisfaction of readers' needs followed much the same course as at Bristol; it was held that the librarian's expenditure of his bookfund should not be subject to Committee interference. A thoroughly healthy attitude was adopted towards Rules and Regulations; they should be couched in terms that presuppose a good standard of general conduct among readers, and should be enforced as reasonably as possible with a minimum of "red tape." They should be available for reference on request, but should be kept out of sight at other times. There should be as few obstacles as possible to the full use of books by readers—simple registration methods; inter-availability of tickets; unrestricted reservation of books of all types; informal, attractive and comfortable buildings; frequent use of the telephone in answering enquiries and obtaining books from other sources.

**THE BOOKISH MANNER.** (*Leader*: S. C. Holliday). The term "manner" was interpreted as embracing a wide variety of relations and inter-relations. The topic was considered under five main heads: the problem of manners towards readers; the manners we ought, or think we ought, to receive from readers; the relationship or attitude towards our colleagues; how manners or general behaviour affect or reflect upon the library as an organisation; and lastly, some attention was given to manners as they concern staff discipline.

There was general agreement that manners were desirable, that assistants should give and should receive courtesy. There was some difference of opinion whether staff-reader relationships should be rather aloof or very friendly. We learned a lot about manners between colleagues and much seemed to turn upon modes of address, the formalists and informalists being sharply divided as usual. As for higher staff, it was felt that chief and deputy librarians were remote and should remain remote and out of the way. It was felt that several aspects of library organisation were themselves evidence of discourtesy, that traditional practices should be re-examined as to their worth and effectiveness. And it was argued that a high standard of individual manners in every assistant would reduce disciplinary problems to a minimum and lengthen the lives of senior administrative staff.

#### **THE INAUGURAL MEETING: LIVERPOOL, 18th MARCH**

Some 40 members took part in the afternoon visits to the Liverpool Public and University Libraries, and between 80 and 90 were present in the evening to see the induction of the President, Mr. J. S. Parsonage, and to hear his most interesting Presidential Address which is printed elsewhere in this issue.

# THE A.A.L. AND THE NON-PUBLIC LIBRARIAN

By H. R. KLIENEGER, *School of Oriental and African Studies  
Library.*

CONFLICTS between groups of interest are latent in our organization, as they must be in any heterogeneous body. To take one instance: those librarians who are outside Local Government service have formally expressed their dissatisfaction with the present constitution of the Library Association; the University and Research Section and the Medical Libraries Section have asked that a Municipal Libraries Section of the L.A. be formed, for the reason that the L.A., as at present constituted, is dominated by public librarians to the detriment of academic and special library interests. They consider it an injustice that matters which affect only public librarians can be, and are, discussed directly at L.A. Council level, and not first at sectional level as are the concerns of special librarians. The educational activities of the L.A. have also repeatedly been accused of public library bias; and whether or not this accusation is justified, the fact remains, that in many British academic libraries L.A. qualifications are not recognized, because they are not considered relevant to the needs of the libraries in question.

Does this affect the A.A.L.? Yes—for the following reasons: it is due to these and similar prejudices that the A.A.L. is to-day deprived of the full support of special and academic librarians. It is true, we have many supporters in industrial research libraries: they recruit their staffs frequently from public libraries or library schools, and have given the Greater London Division those 442 special library members (or one fifth of the total membership in 1953) which make it unique in this respect among the divisions. The scene alters when we come to the libraries of colleges and learned societies. Drawing on my experience as the G.L.D. Committee's "district visitor" among such libraries in the central London area, I should say that the prevailing opinion there is that the A.A.L. is specifically a public librarians' organization. And I have had my attention drawn to the contents of A.A.L. publications and the programmes of G.L.D. meetings in confirmation of this opinion. It is also relevant to mention that now that there are, for better or worse, two sections which represent special librarians—namely, the University and Research Section and the Reference and Special Libraries' Section—many of them feel that they should belong to both, and have withdrawn from the A.A.L. because they were not able or willing to pay the additional five shillings demanded by the Library Association from members who opt for more than two sections.

In fact, the only A.A.L. members in this type of library are junior assistants, studying for L.A. examinations; and these are few and far between. If it is true that the Library Association itself does not enjoy the same support from all types of librarians—many prominent figures in the academic library-world are not members of the L.A., others are merely dormant members, while yet others support it with misgivings—it is certain that the membership of the A.A.L. is even more one-sided. This means that, while no exact figures are available, particularly for more recent years, there is evidence to show that there is a rather higher percentage of non-public librarians in the L.A. than there is in the A.A.L., except in the London area. While the G.L.D. Committee has now for the first time as many as four non-public librarians among its sixteen

members, there is not a single non-public librarian on the entire A.A.L. Council, and no apparent concern at this among either the Council members or the non-public library membership of the A.A.L.

This is a loss both to the association and to the non-public library world, which is holding itself aloof. Now that subject-specialization is spreading among the larger reference-libraries, and the employment of graduates in public libraries is being widely encouraged, we are beginning to approach the situation which has existed for some time in America, where there is no clear distinction in organization and function between many public and academic libraries, and assistants pass freely from one to the other. Under these circumstances public librarians have much to learn from their colleagues in special and academic libraries, and their co-operation inside the A.A.L. is doubly desirable. Academic librarians have perhaps even more to gain from such contact with public librarians. Mr. Peter Churley has pointed out in an illuminating article in a recent issue of the *Assistant Librarian*, how public librarianship is handicapped by a system of recruitment and training, which has produced a staff, technically competent and informed, but without subject knowledge or literary interests. The reverse is true of many academic libraries. This is not the place to discuss the incidence of nepotism in British libraries; it is the case, however, that there are libraries where vacancies are not advertized, and where the examinations of the Library Association are not considered qualifications for appointment and promotion. This must lead to parochialism, and ultimately to technical backwardness, wasteful administration, subservience to tradition, however obsolete, and to that undesirable form of individualism which makes a librarian ignore all the efforts and improvements which take place in libraries other than his own. One can only hope that more and more of the younger assistants in such libraries will come to seek professional qualifications, with or without the encouragement of their authorities, and that they will actively participate in the work of the A.A.L.

The primary concern of the A.A.L. is, and must be, the encouragement of professional interest; nevertheless, the material and economic aspects of librarianship are within its scope. No account of the place of the special librarian inside the A.A.L. can be complete without a mention of the committee, set up by the A.A.L. towards the end of 1952, to investigate into working-conditions in non-public libraries, as a complement to the committee which produced the Tighe report on public libraries. At the time of writing, the committee, although set up more than a year ago, has never yet met. Nothing could better illustrate the fact, that although the A.A.L. is concerned with non-public as well as with public libraries, its concern with the former is largely theoretical because of the lack of non-public library representation on the Council and throughout the association. Unless special librarians show by their interest and support that they regard the A.A.L. Council and its committee as representing them, these bodies will hesitate to act, if only in order not to be accused of meddling in matters which do not concern them. This is not to say, that a "trade-union attitude" is to be encouraged, if we mean by that an exclusive obsession with length of working-hours, salaries and the like. This has proved detrimental to real progress in other walks of life. (On the other hand, it should be added that it certainly does not follow that, because one is opposed to trade-unionism, one therefore has the good of the profession at heart. Careerists, who are also obsessed with money-matters, may be enemies of trade-unionism but consciously degrade their calling by looking on it primarily as a means of self-advancement). Local Government librarians are, of

course, fortunate in being taken care of by NALGO; there is no corresponding body to cover special librarians, except those in government libraries. The project of the A.A.L. committee referred to above is the first collective approach to the problem of the economic situation of the special librarian. It is therefore significant—even if those are right who say that our sense of duty and vocation should make us seek first the progress and perfection of the institutions we serve; only then can we expect that "all these things shall be added unto us."

## THE EMBRYO LIBRARIANS

By Ann M. Dixon and Christine T. Murray, *Scottish School of Librarianship*.  
(With apologies to W. S. Gilbert).

We are the very models of two embryo librarians:

We're courteous to the readers, both the forward and the wary 'uns;

At lib'r'y school we make our tutors' lives a hell or even worse,

Irrelevancies we at once turn into every kind of verse.

In spite of these activities test papers we contrive to pass,

Thus justifying our admission into this outstanding class.

We try to learn our Dewey and the tables categorical;

We know the form divisions and recite in tone rhetorical

Enormous lists of reference books which never will be any use,

And likewise lists of writings by such characters as Ennius.

Administration periods are full of lively anecdotes

Of how the Local Room should treat such things as Ossianic notes,

Or deal with dusty archives, and their broken seals attach to them,

A task so deadly boring that we'd want to put a match to them!

We catalogue some author entries; subject headings are our bane,

And serial publications seem to crop up time and time again.

We know the proper way to treat all volumes bound in leather, but

We can't find how to get a shine on Winterbottoms' "Never-Kut."

So, clever than our readers, both the forward and the wary 'uns

We'll be the very models of two fully-fledged librarians!

## CORRESPONDENCE

\* \* \*

We are asked by Messrs. Kodak, Ltd. (for Photostat, Ltd.) and Hoefer Ltd. to emphasise that the imprecise use of their respective trade names to describe a technical method (referred to by R. J. Hoy in his article in our January issue) is indeed inaccurate (as stated in that article) and could lead to an action for infringement.

\* \* \*

### PROFESSIONAL— NON-PROFESSIONAL

*To a non-professional.*

Thank goodness, you, my dear housewife to be, are in the minority. To have many people with such obvious lack of ambition spells doom to the future of Librarianship. Very few of us care to sit Examinations. I certainly don't, but surely the general knowledge obtained during the study for this Examination is of use



in itself.

Ah! yes, but I forgot your widening interests. You say you wish to enjoy life for five or six years without worrying! Without responsibility would be a more apt expression! Even in counter work an assistant must hold herself responsible to each individual reader. He must be made to feel that he and his problems are of prime importance—this is simple psychology. By all means keep to your pasting and making tea, but to let you loose amongst the public—No!

A Librarian's job is to give our readers the information or reading material they want as quickly and intelligently as possible. To deal with the simplest of queries as to books, new publications, quick references, the assistant must have an enquiring mind—and the assistant with an enquiring mind will pass the Entrance Examination.

This is the machine age and why should the Library Authorities pay non-professional staff when in a few years' time machines or robots will do the work equally well.

I am not old, ugly, frustrated, or super intelligent—I, too, enjoy life, but I find my job worthy of the effort I put into it.

SHEILA I. WILD,  
*Student, Newcastle Library School.*

It is only possible in the largest libraries to employ full-time readers' advisers, and I do not see a practical alternative to the general method of employing some qualified staff on counter work for a part of their duties. I am myself concerned with the question of raising our professional status in the public estimation, but it is not going to be solved simply by leaving the issue desk in the hands of non-professional staff. Many of us spend a part of our days on jobs which strictly speaking do not require professional training, but can this be avoided? It is true of other professions, as a moment's thought will show, and it is time that librarians rid themselves of this inferiority complex. What I do maintain is that our

training *should* give us that attitude of mind—compounded of professional standards, the discipline of scholarship and the spirit of public service—which will pervade everything we do.

RUTH M. FISHER,  
*Branch Librarian, Eston Branch,  
North Riding Co. L.*

As a rather late entry into the library service, I was delighted to read Mr. Corbett's article in the March issue. To be a keen General Division library assistant, eager to widen her knowledge of writers past and present and other subjects, at the same time studying for examinations, is agony indeed. Whilst not completely entertaining a defeatist attitude towards these very desirable qualifying examinations, it is most refreshing to learn that a good General Division assistant is both a valuable and a desirable person in a public library. I am tempted to ask how many people retain all the knowledge required for these examinations, and a reading knowledge of a foreign language, if much of it has lain idle for years, when they are on the line for promotion?

MISS L. L. LETHAM,  
*Assistant, Ealing P.L.*

## LIBRARY ECONOMY

I should like to query one section of the interesting article by M. Wilden-Hart in the March *Assistant Librarian*, namely, that headed "Financial consideration." Here money problems are dismissed with a wave of the hand and £140 or so, "found to be sufficient for a single person for the nine months." Presumably this is a maintenance grant only and the question of school fees has been dealt with, but even so it allows a very small margin on which to exist.

Although we are living in a state supported age which spoon feeds us from cradle to grave with family allowances, National Health Service, pensions, and goodness knows what else, it is still possible for the lack of sufficient money to be a real handicap when the person is unable to obtain



help from parents or any other means.

Let the following figures speak for themselves—an estimate for a year's course at a School of Librarianship, excluding tuition and examination fees:—

	£	s.	d.
Cost of travel in connection with visits	7	10	0
Cost of books, stationery, etc.	10	0	0
College Union fee	6	0	0
Accommodation (at approximately £3 10s. per week for an academic year of about 36 weeks)	126	0	0
Total	£149	0	0

Miss B. COLLINS,  
Asst.-in-Charge, Lending Dept.,  
Weston-super-Mare P.L.

### REORGANIZATION

I write to correct a misunderstanding which may arise from the article by J. L. Gardner *Towards a standardisation of library practices* in your April issue. Referring to the nationalisation of public libraries (whatever that may mean), Mr. Gardner implies that the recommendations of the McColvin Report were backed by the Library Association in its subsequent "Proposals for a sound library service" (sic).

Many of Mr. McColvin's recommendations were embodied in the proposals by the Council of the Library Association published in 1943 under the title of *The Public Library Service: its post-war reorganization and development*, but when these proposals were submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Library Association at the Blackpool Conference in 1946 a motion that paragraphs 12-16 relating to library areas "be withdrawn for further consideration, and that adequate consultations be made with local authorities before further proposals are issued" was carried. At two subsequent Annual General Meetings we were informed that the Council would bring forward other proposals, but it has, in fact, never done so, and we

therefore have the most extraordinary situation that at a time when local government reorganization is at least a distinct possibility in the very near future the Library Association has no accepted policy on library areas should its views be sought.

J. T. GILLETI,  
Borough Librarian, Willesden.

### ENGLISH LITERATURE

I should like to add a few remarks to those made by Miss Jackson in the March issue of the *Assistant Librarian*.

Her criticisms of the English papers seem to me neither "ill-placed" nor "unscholarly," but very much to the point. I myself sat (and, I hasten to add, passed) the December English examination, and several of the questions struck me as much too involved for the time allowed. The question on Spenser which Miss Jackson mentions is one on which I wrote an essay during my last year at University, and even after three weeks' work, I still felt I had not begun to scratch the surface of the subject. How then can anyone produce even the outline of an answer in half-an-hour?

I would like to carry her argument further, and ask why any question should be asked which involves such detailed consideration of one author. A librarian's knowledge of books should preferably be both broad and thorough, but certainly broad. Would it not be better if the papers covered more of the whole field of English literature, instead of concentrating so much on particular authors? I join issue on this point with Miss Jackson, since the questions on the seventeenth century and the Victorians seemed to me to approach most closely to what I had hoped and expected the paper would be. In fact, the questions suited me admirably, but I had hoped for questions testing knowledge of a rather different kind—knowledge in which I knew myself to be deficient. Surely the English papers should examine candidates in: the type of knowledge a librarian may be expected to need, instead of imitating the work

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of the English Schools in our Universities.

CHRISTINE T. MURRAY,  
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### LIBRARY PERIODICALS

As Thomas Clearwater has raised once again the question of a scholarly library journal in this country, I should like to remind readers of proposals to the same end which were submitted to the L.A. Council by the University and Research Section soon after the end of the war.

Reduced to their essentials these were that the *L.A. Record* should be divided into two journals. One would contain all the "domestic" information which now appears in *L.A.R.*, e.g., Council notes, appointments and retirements, advertisements of vacancies, meetings, and so on; this would continue to appear monthly. The other publication would contain the substantial articles which now appear in *L.A.R.*, and should be published quarterly.

I cannot remember all the arguments offered in support of these proposals, but it seems reasonable to believe that a quarterly of the sort proposed might command a sale abroad which would add to the L.A.'s income, and that the existence of such a journal might help to attract contributions of a higher standard than have normally appeared in the *Record* in recent years.

So far as my memory serves me, the L.A. rejected the proposals on account of the difficulty of starting a new journal, lack of supplies of paper, and so forth, but it so happened that Aslib managed, almost simultaneously, to begin the publication of the *Journal of documentation*, and so prove that the proposals of the U. and R. Section were at least feasible, if the will had been present.

I still believe that these proposals offer the best starting point for what Thomas Clearwater wants to see (and don't we all?) and I suggest that the A.A.L. should consider the possibility of taking them up again, in conjunction with the University and Research

Section, and press them on the L.A. Council, if necessary, in an amended form. The Reference and Special Libraries Section might also be interested, and if this is true it suggests that the time is ripe for a renewed consideration of the question.

Whether the L.A. or the A.A.L. can exert any influence on the "private" library journals, I do not know, but it is certainly true that they present a sorry picture nowadays. If they could be persuaded to pool their resources and concentrate on a single publication, the chances of producing something really worth while would be immensely increased.

R. J. HOY.

*Deputy Librarian, School of Oriental and African Studies.*

The true purpose of a critic is to be factual and constructive. It appears to me that Thomas Clearwater in *Revaluations VI* in your April issue is neither.

"Coyness about anonymity and pseudonymity" is applicable to Thomas Clearwater, too. Why cloak himself? Let us all know who speaks in so seeming authoritative voice that we may judge the righteousness of his claims to be read with respect.

Whilst it is not for me to defend the *Library World*, the statement that "the *Library World* to-day consists for the most part, etc." needs more justifying than T.C.'s substantiation.

Since October, 1953, articles by E.

R. Luke, P. Hepworth, George Gray, C. F. Shepherd, Robert Vosper and T. M. Rogers have appeared in the *Library World*. Were all these of "insufficient quality or general interest to merit publication elsewhere"?

Lastly, I do not need Thomas Clearwater's praise for my bravery in eschewing anonymity nor his condemnation in probing the decayed issues in which only I delight. Over the past six months the themes of my "Topicalities" have been (a) the non-reading of professional journals; (b) effect of increased issues on financial demands; (c) recruitment of junior staff; (d) the increase in obscene and pornographic literature; (e) annual awards to librarians for literary efforts; and (f) applications for and acceptance of black-listed posts.

If all these are decayed issues for librarians, then Thomas Clearwater must be living in either a different country or a different age. If these problems have been solved already, I shall be only too happy for Thomas Clearwater to write "Topicalities" in future, though I warn him there will be no financial reward for his labours.

It is only a short step from hiding one's light under a bushel to burying one's head in the sand. I suggest the water would be much clearer if unpolluted by biased opinion and meagre respect for fact.

A. G. S. ENSER,

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## ROUND THE DIVISIONS—7

# LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT

THE LIVERPOOL and District Association of Assistant Librarians was formed in 1908 for the purpose of bringing together all persons in the Liverpool District who were interested in Public Library work. The efforts of the Association were limited to a given area so that the requirements of local assistants could be more thoroughly considered without interfering in any way with the work of any similar body. The subscription was

2s. 6d. annually. Out of this 6d. was set aside for the Association Library. Membership of the Association at that time was approximately 40.

By 1920 there were in existence in the area: (a) North Western Branch of the Library Association; (b) North Western Branch of the Library Assistants' Association; (c) Liverpool and District Association of Assistant Librarians. At the Annual General Meeting of the Liverpool and District

Association on April 16th, 1920, members were asked to vote on the question of affiliation with the Library Assistants' Association, when the majority decided in favour of amalgamation. On October 1st, 1920, the Association became a Division of the North Western Branch.

The Division, as we now know it, dates from 1947, when, it having become apparent that the North Western Branch covered too wide an area, a resolution was put before the A.A.L. Council that two new Divisions of the Association be created, to be known as the Liverpool and District, and the Manchester and District Divisions, with a common boundary agreed by the new Divisions. The Liverpool and District Division covers the area from Lancaster to Chester on the west side and is separated on the east from the Manchester area, by Preston, Wigan, and Warrington.

Membership of the Division last year was 440. Attendance at meetings varies from 30 to 80 members. The Committee consists of the Honorary Officers and twelve members, six from the Liverpool Public Libraries and six from the other libraries in the Division. It is the custom that the Chairman is elected annually from the Liverpool and non-Liverpool members alternately, but this is by no means a hard and fast rule. The Annual General Meeting is held in the home area of the Chairman.

The Divisional Committee meets usually six times a year in the Liverpool Public Library, by courtesy of the City Librarian. An average of six to eight meetings of members are held annually, and are arranged as far as possible to be held at the main centres in the Division, being scattered over as wide an area as possible. The policy for meetings is to arrange visits to the important libraries in the area, and to hold discussions and talks on all aspects of librarianship. Visits to bookbinders and papermakers are arranged. A film show was arranged and was held before the June examinations last year. Several films on book-

binding and paper-making, and on American and Colonial libraries were shown.

The Committee feels that as much as possible should be done to attract the teen-age member, and to encourage the younger members to give papers at meetings and join in the discussion. It is hoped to see more of the younger members putting themselves up for election to the Divisional Committee.

The Division co-operates with the Manchester and District Division and the North-West Branch of the Library Association in the publication of the *North-Western Newsletter*, which was begun in 1950 under the editorship of Mr. A. C. Jones, then of Warrington Public Library, and now editor of the *Assistant Librarian*. Its policy is to include articles on librarianship by members, accompanied by information about contributors, notices of future meetings, accounts of meetings, and announcements.

Before the setting up of the part-time School of Librarianship in Liverpool, and the appointment of a full-time tutor, the Divisional Committee was responsible for the organisation of classes in the area. A special sub-committee was set up for the purpose. The Division also maintains a library, being one of the few to do so. This library suffered considerable losses when the Public Library in Liverpool, where it was housed, was damaged in the air raids of 1941. A grant of £75 was made to the Division from the Public Library War Damage Fund. During the last year the Committee resolved that the library be transferred to the School of Librarianship in the City College of Commerce, where it should be easily available to members of the Association. This transfer has been carried out and the Divisional Committee has now drawn up rules for the government of the library.

Social activities are left mainly to the staff guilds of the various libraries in the Division. The Committee, however, arranges an Annual Divisional Dance in Liverpool. This has been well attended in recent years.

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